



## Our Mission Statement

Granville Sports College is committed to:

- Raising standards of achievement and creating opportunities for all pupils, regardless of needs to develop their full potential and improve their life chances
- Raising the aspirations of the whole school community by creating a culture of continuous learning that celebrates success at all levels
- Developing a school that is the pride of the local area where pupils, parents, staff, governors and wider community feel valued, listened to and welcomed for the diverse contribution they make to our school life

## Formal Complaints Procedure – Parents and Public

Co-ordinator: Jo Kingswood  
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Review date: February 2018

## Background

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 requires that:

The governing board of a maintained school shall:

- Establish procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the school or to the provision of facilities or services under section 27, other than complaints falling to be dealt with in accordance with any procedures required to be established in relation to the school by virtue of a statutory provision other than this section;
- Publicise the procedures so established.

Many matters that come to the attention of teachers and Head Teachers as complaints are resolved amicably through discussion. It would be wrong to categorise such cases as complaints. However, care must be taken not to obstruct the right of someone to pursue the formal complaints procedure if that is their wish.

Procedures should ensure that problems are sorted out quickly and that the person

complaining is given fair treatment and a chance to state their case.

Complaints generally fall into two broad groups:

1. Complaints about the curriculum
2. General complaints about other matters

The procedures that Governing Bodies are required to have are the same for both types of complaint. Complaints will either be from a parent/carer of a student at the School or from a member of the public.

At Granville, our aim is to provide a safe and secure environment in which our students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We strongly believe a child will achieve more when the School, its students and their parents/carers work together. We have a formal programme of consultation meetings each year in which academic progress, behaviour, attitude, and other issues are discussed.

These meetings provide opportunities for parents/carers to raise matters of concern about the curriculum or other issues. If a concern is not resolved through discussion with the teacher, the parent/carer or teacher can refer it to a member of the Leadership Team. This includes curriculum leaders, pastoral leaders, Assistant Heads, the Deputy Head Teacher or the Head Teacher.

## Curriculum Complaints

Parents/carers may use this Procedure if they believe the School is failing to:

- Provide the National Curriculum in the School for a particular child
- Follow the law on charging for School activities
- Offer only approved qualifications or syllabuses
- Provide religious education and daily collective worship
- Provide the information they have to provide
- Carry out any statutory duty relating to the curriculum
- or if it is acting unreasonably in any of the above cases.

For complaints about the Head Teacher or a Governing Body, the first formal stage of the procedure is for the Governing Body to consider the complaint. If the parent/carer is still not satisfied after this, he or she can put the complaint to the Local Authority.

## General Complaints

The responsibility for dealing with complaints that do not fall within the definition of curriculum complaints lies with the School's Governing Board. Appeals against Governing Board decisions and procedures can be made to the Local Authority and to the Secretary of State.

## Complaints from members of the Public

Complaints from members of the public should be made direct to a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the School. This will be to the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher or to an Assistant Head Teacher. Where some issues are concerned (for instance, those involving the School site), the complaint may be made to the School Business Manager.

### Aim of procedure

This complaints procedure is established in order to allow anyone to make formal representations to the school if they feel they have a complaint of any sort. It is important to distinguish between **formal complaints** and **concerns**.

A **concern** is an issue which requires explanation and/or discussion and will, with care, be resolved informally

A **formal complaint** involves a serious concern which requires formal investigation

Granville Sports College's formal complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial** and **non-adversarial**;
- be carried out within established **time-limits** ensuring that all involved are kept informed of the progress of investigations at all stages;
- ensure a **full** and **fair** investigation by an independent person;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- provide **information** to appropriate staff so that services can be improved.

### The procedure

There are **four** stages to the procedure; it is envisaged that each stage will be used in turn. If at any time a complainant is dissatisfied at any particular stage, the next stage can be invoked.

**Stage 1:** Complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint)  
Clarify the exact nature of the complaint. Initially, the member of staff dealing with the complaint will have a discussion, either by telephone or at a meeting, with the person making the complaint. The purpose of the discussion will be to clarify the exact nature of the complaint and to determine what, if any, further action is appropriate.

Some action on the part of the School or the complainant may be necessary before the complaint can be resolved. This will be agreed during the initial discussion. Where possible, the School will seek to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of all parties involved and the

outcome will be communicated to the complainant either by telephone or in writing.

**Stage 2:** Complaint heard by member of the Senior Leadership Team

If after stage one the complaint has not been resolved or if in the initial stages or there are serious concerns regarding the nature of the complaint, the complaint will be referred to a member of SLT. The SLT member will seek to resolve the complaint, either by telephone or at a meeting to the satisfaction of all parties involved. The outcome will be communicated to the complainant either by telephone or in writing.

**Stage 3:** Complaint heard by the Headteacher

If, at this initial stage, the complaint is not accepted or resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complaint can be made, in writing, to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will look into the complaint and try to resolve the complaint either by telephone, at a meeting or in writing, will respond either in writing or by telephone. Where possible, the Head Teacher will seek an acceptable outcome that satisfies all parties involved.

**Stage 4:** Complaint made to chair of Governing Body and Governing Board

If the Head Teacher does not accept the complaint, or is unable to resolve the complaint within 15 school working days, or where the Head Teacher is the subject of the complaint, the complainant can make the complaint, in writing, to the Chair of Governors. The Head Teacher may also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be considered at a meeting of the Governing Body. If the complaint is complex, the Chair of Governors can appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews. This evidence will be presented at the Governors' meeting at which the complaint is to be considered.

The Chair of Governors or the Clerk to Governors will communicate the Governors' decision to the complainant, in writing or by telephone. The right of appeal to an external body will be explained in cases where the complaint is not accepted.

To initiate a formal complaint, the **form for making a formal complaint** must be used (**see Appendix 2**).

The Headteacher acts as the **Complaints Co-ordinator**, and will delegate this role, if appropriate, to another member of staff.

**Stage 1: Complaint Heard by Staff Member**

Complainant completes form (see appendix 2) and staff member investigates.

**Time scale – investigation to be completed 2 working days from receipt of the form**

**Response – complainant to be contacted by telephone**

The school respects the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a formal complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the issue can be referred to another staff member. Where the formal complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant may be referred to the chair of

governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complainant may be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the formal complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the governor should immediately advise the complainant to follow the procedure as defined here, as the governor may be required for the complaints panel if the issue reaches stage 4

#### **Stage 2: Formal Complaint Heard by member of the Senior Leadership Team**

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the formal complaint was handled at stage one. At this stage they may therefore request that the formal complaint be heard by a member of the Leadership Team. That person will be nominated by the Headteacher. The member of Leadership Team hearing the formal complaint may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but **not** the decision on the action to be taken.

**Time scale – investigation to be completed 2 working days from receipt of form**

**Response – complainant to be contacted by telephone**

#### **Stage 3: Formal Complaint Heard by Headteacher**

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stages one and two. At this stage they may therefore request that the complaint be heard by the Headteacher. The head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

**Time scale – investigation to 2 working days from receipt of form**

**Response – complainant to be contacted by telephone**

#### **Stage 4: Formal Complaint Heard by Chair of Governing Board and Governing Board**

The complainant needs to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the formal complaint. The Chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a Governing Body complaints panel.

**Time scale – panel held within 10 working days of receipt of form**

## **Governor Complaints Appeal Panel**

The Governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The Governing body may nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, and set out its terms of reference. The procedure adopted by the panel for hearing appeals is set out in the **Checklist for a Panel Hearing (see Appendix 1)**. The panel can be drawn from the nominated members and may consist of three or five people. The panel may choose their own chairperson.

## The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

There are several points which any Governors' sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial
- d. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- e. The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### The Role of the Clerk

The clerk is the contact point for the complainant and is required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel’s decision.

**The Role of the Chair of the Governing Board or the Nominated Governor**

The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel.

**The Role of the Chair of the Panel**

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

**Signed ..... Jo Kingswood (Head)**

**Signed ..... David Gaskin (Chair of Governing Board)**

### Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

## Appendix 2

### Formal complaints form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.  
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**